

Catholic Cult and Culture

REVEREND GERALD ELLARD, S.J.

*Address given at the Rocky Mountain Catholic Literature Congress,
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THAT Bishop Vehr should have arranged, when this literature congress was being projected, to have a Solemn Pontifical Mass as one of its crowning features, was itself a bold assertion of the topic of my address: That the remarkable revival now well under way in the field of Catholic letters is very largely owing to inspiration welling from the fountain-head of the Church's liturgy.

I shall describe, as best I can, the debt which the new literature owes to the liturgy. I shall ask your forbearance, however, if I preface my topic with the briefest narration of how other outstanding manifestations of Catholic Action in America today regard the liturgy as their source of proper motivation, and the solution in large measure of their several problems.

Thus, the newly-founded League of Social Justice, enjoining on its members attendance at one or more non-obligatory Mass, and, if possible, the reception of Communion, each week, offers a conspicuous instance with which to begin.

The Catholic Interracial Federation finds it good at its annual meetings to study the liturgy in connection with the manifold questions growing out of negro-and-white relations: the address on this subject in the past September convention was by His Excellency Archbishop John McNicholas of Cincinnati.

The bearing of the liturgy, again, on the thorny questions of the Catholic Rural Life Conferences under Bishop O'Hara has been increasingly stressed as last year's convention at Dubuque revealed in particularly clear light. From the city of Archbishop Beckman has come the report of a Diocesan Catholic Action Week, in which the liturgy is also well to the fore.

When the delegates of the National Council of Catholic Women gathered with Archbishop Murray there was recorded yet another proof of the all-pervading force of the liturgical current in present-day Catholic life. That the N. C. C. W. should be particularly susceptible to this force is what we should expect in view of their extensive study-club work on this subject. The Catholic Association for International Peace proposes to give special emphasis to this basis of peace in its next general meeting.

The place of formal instruction in liturgy in our educational programs has been discussed by the National Catholic Educational Association for several years, with the result that religious instruction in our progressive institutions, from elementary grades up to the universities, is being fast reshaped now to make way for the new ideas. At the Summer Schools of Catholic Action the liturgy courses have, from the outset, been among those in greatest demand, just as, under Father Lord's guidance, it has become more and more dominant in the whole Youth Movement of the Sodality. Indeed, Father Lord makes the sweeping claim in his *Call to Catholic Action*, "We may almost say that devotion to the Mass and the appreciation of Catholic liturgy are at the very basis of Catholic Action."

How architects, sculptors, painters, and metal-workers find the new movement an unfailing source of inspiration is proved amply, not only by the appearance of our newest churches or last year's Small Church Exhibit in New York or the current one in San Francisco, but by the successful launching in these years of depression of *The Liturgical Arts* quarterly.

It is a far cry from that sumptuous periodical to *The Catholic Worker*, that brave little penny tabloid just established for the laborer, the Communist, and the near-Communist. Its founder and editor, Dorothy Day, recently said: "In my work for the laborer and the reclamation of the Communist, I regard nothing of greater value than the liturgy."

Such periodicals as *THE CATHOLIC MIND*, *America*, *The Commonweal*, *The Catholic World*, *Sign*, *Light*, scarcely appear now in any issue without some clear reflection of this latest news-field. Lastly, the *Catholic Hour*, our most universal appeal to non-Catholic America, was recently given

over for several weeks to the now very general topic of the liturgy.

Such multiple activities are proof of how, in Michael Williams's phrase, "the resurgent power of the Faith now manifestly at work . . . turns her attention . . . to deal with all her problems simultaneously." We stand on the threshold, not of a literary revival alone, but one as many-sided as Catholicism itself, dogmatic, philosophical, literary, artistic, ascetic, educational, sociological, probably even political. And that these manifold expressions of virile Catholicity should *all* draw force and inspiration from what is called the liturgy of the Church, that is, the public and corporate worship of God, is itself a phenomenon worth one's best attention.

An additional and distinctly Catholic proof is thereby furnished the theme which Christopher Dawson's books make clearer every year, that "every culture is a religion culture," and that the integrating element of culture is cult, or the worship of God.

So truly is this fact emerging in all modern Catholic Action that one can without hardihood judge that no movement can now be a properly effective or complete presentation of Catholicism unless its promoters be themselves imbued with and living with the life of corporate worship. An evangel not including the consciousness of corporate worship lacks an aspect of the truth whereby our age shall be made free, and veils, in fact, the special apprehension of Catholicism characteristic of the twentieth century.

These are high claims to advance, all the more so, since by inference they accuse the Catholic consciousness, not yet touched by this "new" life of the liturgy, of an incomplete realization of our religion. What, then, is meant by liturgy? And what can, or rather, what *must*, the liturgy give us, and every Catholic everywhere who is living in the full spirit of the present-day Catholicism? Before any examination of how the liturgy is effecting or affecting the revival, these questions demand an answer.

The very word *liturgy* demands definition in its modern usage. In the course of time this term lost its original meaning, and was debased to an incomprehensibly narrowed signification, as ritual direction, or ceremonial etiquette. Liturgy in this sense, and until a few years ago, was merely

rubrical direction, and made up what clerics call "the red print" in the service-books. In its now-restored meaning the word once more denotes what it did to the Greeks and Romans of antiquity, to the Seventy Scholars who made the Septuagint Version of the Scriptures, to St. Paul, who does not hesitate to call Christ "the Liturgist of God" (Hebr. viii, 2). As formerly, so now again, liturgy is essentially a public and social work, something done on behalf of the commonweal, a service for society. In the realm of religion, liturgy embraces the whole worship of God by Christ, the Liturgist of God with whom is associated in the endless worship of the Father, His Body upon earth, His Church, of which each of us is an integral, howsoever insignificant, member. Liturgy is corporate worship, the common worship of God by that body of which Christ Himself is the Head and the Mouthpiece and the vital bond linking and vivifying into a vast world-wide body every baptized soul.

Liturgy, then, is the Mystical Body, that is, Christ-and-all-Christians at prayer. This is objective truth whether we realize it or no, whether we advert to it or not. But the apprehension of this great truth in all its personal and social implications is what is "new" in the modern study and life of the liturgy. This reawakened apprehension is strikingly described in the lines of Katherine Brégy:

That tremendous re-discovery of the Christian past—that vision which included the mystic Communion of all Saints, the Real and sacrificial presence of the Living God, the brooding empire of the Holy Ghost over an undivided Church, and all the multitudinous sacramentalism of a living Catholicity.

To those initiated into the full meaning of corporate worship there neither is, nor can be, such a thing as a Christian who stands alone. Neither with regard to God nor with regard to the world are we ever really solitary creatures. Rather there is a confident assurance, growing out of an abiding realization that we are always and everywhere enacting social rôles.

On the postage stamp commemorating the National Industrial Recovery Act we read the phrase "In a Common Determination," of which the antithesis is the "Rugged Individualism" just now so anathematized. Now, when we shall have banished rugged, that is, exaggerated individual-

ism, from our spiritual outlook ("There is no room for individualism in the Mystical Body," said His Excellency Bishop Rummel of Omaha in a recent address on this subject), when we shall have banished rugged individualism from our Christianity, and are dominated by the consideration of our fellow-men, *then* we shall possess the spirit of corporative existence, so eloquently portrayed in our corporate worship. Let us engage these concepts a little more closely.

Christianity is not merely an adherence to a changeless creed, but a life to be lived to the full: we are all supposed to be in our own ways faultless reproductions of Christ in twentieth-century surroundings. Neither do the dogmas of the Faith bear the same relation to each other in life as in the logical disposition, let us say, of the *Apostles' Creed*. That there are three Persons in one Divine Nature is the highest truth, but it is not of itself *the* truth that will best support one in the onslaughts of violent temptation. Nor need the doctrines around which successive generations build their motivation be always the same: in point of fact they vary from age to age.

Now, in the disruptive *milieu* in which we are living, there are two foci around which the truths of Faith group themselves. The first of these is the indwelling of God through sanctifying grace in the Christian soul, and this, since it is the *leit-motif* of St. John's Gospel, is called Johannine Christianity. The second truth, which in a way includes the first, turns upon our relationships with God and our fellow-men by very reason of our membership in the Church of Christ; this, the burden of all St. Paul's writings, is called Pauline Catholicism.

Père Pourrat, the foremost living historian of Catholic spirituality, affirms without qualification:

At the present time the spiritual doctrines most widely taught, and the most popular, are the Pauline and the Johannine, which are founded on the doctrine of our incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of the Divine Persons in our souls.

Pourrat's discerning judgment is seconded by Father D'Arcy in the brilliant studies on *The Coördination of Catholic Devotion* and *The Present Day* in "The Life of the Church":

For a long period after the Reformation [he says], the theologians had been occupied with the question of what is called actual grace. Gradually in the last century the center of interest changed to that of sanctifying grace and to the doctrine of the Mystical Body. . . . *It may well be regarded as the sign and seal of modern Christianity.* (Italics added.)

These two guiding truths are revealed truths, and theoretically could be learned by the laity by piecing together chance references in sermons, books, and lectures. But every one knows that these truths, in any adequate comprehension, are *not* learned except by some special study at adult age. The knowledge of sanctifying grace is best imparted when the closed retreat completes the work of reading, sermon-courses, and study. The truths of the Mystical Body are best inculcated and illustrated, and actually reduced to practice, by intelligent participation in corporate worship. The law of prayer, in the ancient theological axiom, clarifies and instills the law of belief, and we might add, of action.

Thus, if the thronging thousands in our churches really apprehended that in our worship they are collectively and literally acting "in Christ, and with Christ, and through Christ," as the solemn formula of the Mass puts it, that they are then and there in very truth "together the body of Christ and severally His members," how could they fail to carry this only adequate concept of their social position over into the manifold associations of the day or week?

Thus it is with the keenest analysis of the currents of present-day Catholicism in America that Michael Williams, in the article referred to above, writes:

The splendid growth of the lay retreat movement and of the liturgical movement—which together fructify so many artistic interests: music, architecture, sculpture, painting, drama and poetry—are sure proofs that the inner springs of the spiritual life are flowing freely among our people.

Other, besides artistic, interests, as I have pointed out, are fructified by the liturgical movement: no further emphasis need be given that thought just now. Mr. Williams goes on to hail the signs of the Catholic literary awakening in America, and he greets the new order as "a glorious thing, and the dawn of a great day of opportunity." Coventry Patmore, one of the first promoters of the Revival in Eng-

land, saluted it from afar thirty years ago. In his *Religio Poetae* he remarked:

I think it must be manifest to fitly qualified observers that religion, which to timid onlookers appears to be in a fair way to total extinction, is actually . . . in the initial stage of a new development, of which the note will be *real apprehension*, whereby Christianity will acquire such a power of appeal to . . . our natural feelings and instincts as will cause it to appear almost like a New Dispensation.

This "almost New Dispensation" is now breaking upon us.

Our present consideration may be completed by showing in brief compass how the leaders of this literary revival are inspired by the two spiritual truths we have just dwelt upon, and how these same writers in turn interpret these spiritual principles in their several presentations of Catholicism.

The Revival has progressed to the stage in France where its history has been recorded. When I read Calvet's introductory analysis of the causes of the Revival in *Le Renouveau Catholique*, the words cited below made me distinctly uneasy:

One can never emphasize enough the importance of Catholic liturgy, and the restoration of our liturgy, for our literary revival. The neo-Christian symbolist conducts, the artists within the sanctuary, where they discover that worship employs rites of an art incomparably rich. It is before such spectators that the Catholic liturgy, under the impulse of the Popes, religious orders and scholars, is renewed and revived. . . . The Church thus stands out as the depository of splendid and rare artistic treasures, the more compelling as she associates them to unlock for us the magic of poetry, music, painting, and rhythmic movement in the harmony of her Offices, true lyric dramas for earth as well as Heaven.

These words were at first disconcerting, for they say nothing of the basic and essential values of corporate worship. But further reading reassured me, as for instance the passage:

[But this] is to halt at superficial and wholly external considerations. . . . The sacramental life and the dogma of the Communion of Saints, for example, what boundless and inspiring perspectives do not these disclose.

Quite conceivably it would be possible to over-emphasize the direct influence of the "new" liturgy on the Catholic Revival. But even at first sight this fact stands out boldly:

the Revival has thus far reached its greatest fruitfulness in those countries, principally France and Germany, where the diffusion of the new liturgical spirit has most leavened the educated circles. In America both movements are just beginning; in England they progress steadily. But on the Continent the Revival, directly and emphatically sounding the note of the Mystical Body of Christ, is already fructifying many fields of writing.

In sacred theology the new aura breathes in the work of such Frenchmen as Jules Lebreton, Léonce de Grandmaison, Maurice de la Taille, Fernand Prat, the Belgian Emile Meersch, the German Karl Adam of Tübingen, the Austrian Josef Jungmann of Innsbruck. Philosophers whose pens are dipped in the same font of inspiration count the Munich professor, Dietrich von Hildebrand, his colleague in Berlin (German despite an Italian name) Romano Guardini, the Viennese Rudolf Allers, their French contemporaries, Jaques Maritain, Étienne Gilson, the English Capuchin Father Cuthbert, and the Jesuit Martin D'Arcy.

The mantle of Abbot Columba Marmion of Maredsous, who first popularized the truths of the Mystical Body in modern ascetical literature, has fallen to numerous heirs; besides his countryman, Père Jaegher, the Frenchmen, Plus and Duperray have distinguished themselves, as have the Germans, Peter Lippert and Athanasius Wintersig, the Englishment, Abbot Vonier of Buckfast, Fathers Martindale and Steuart, and Archbishop Goodier. Eric Gill's studies in aesthetics in England recall Abbot Ildephonse Herwegen's at Maria Laach.

In the all-important fields of sociology and economics we are grateful to be able to mention in one breath names like Father Nell-Breuning of Frankfort-on-the-Main, Father Yves de la Brière of the International Labor Office at Geneva, Gilbert K. Chesterton, of the world at large, so to speak, Dr. John A. Ryan of the Catholic University, and the veterans, Mr. Frederick Kenkel and Father Husslein, both of St. Louis.

The Englishmen, Belloc, Hollis, Dawson, and Lewis, and, in this country, Dr. Guilday and William Walsh, have broadened historical horizons, and shown us that history is one of our best weapons. But where to find in English-speaking lands Catholic playwrights like Ghéon and Sierra, more es-

sayists like Katherine Brégy, Agnes Repplier and Father Daly, more novelists like René Bazin, biographers like Bremond and Sigrid Undset, more hagiographers like Louis Bertrand and Father James Broderick?

It is the work of these groups of writers to mirror Catholicism in one or another aspect to the world, while it remains the prerogative of the poet to see and hymn the whole. He it is, as Joyce Kilmer phrases it in his lecture on Francis Thompson, who recalls to us that the proper study of mankind is—God. "A universal poet," he says, "must sing the universe, and the center of the universe is God." It is among the poets that one finds the clearest enunciation of the evangel we have been studying, God's indwelling in the soul, and the realization of membership in the Mystical Body of Christ.

For all his traveling through earthly marts and courts there is perhaps no one of our generation who sounds this double spiritual message more clearly than Paul Claudel. Mention was made a moment ago of Coventry Patmore, the never-varying theme of whose poetry was, as he phrased it, "the relation of the soul to Christ as betrothed wife." But the wider concept of all Christian souls in common relationship to God as the one Mystical Body of Christ, this it was given to him to glimpse only late in life, too late to pass in any large way into his song. This spiritual vision was the reward of a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1877 and it left him "with a tranquil sense that the prayers of thirty-five years had been granted." What he then realized was that in Mary, as the embodiment of Christian womanhood, "was found the perfect complement of God's infinitude: she was *Regina Mundi* as well as *Regina Cœli*," because every member of Christ is united to Mary.

Patmore's vision here of the Mystical Body as mirrored in Mary found little place in his own verse, but it was handed on to his intimate friend, the greater poet and greater seer, Francis Thompson. No one has experienced the thought of God's indwelling more poignantly or expressed it so apocalyptically as the author of "The Hound of Heaven." But the second note of our modern Catholic spirit, the consciousness of the Mystical Body, is found only in his *New Songs*, written after he had lived with Patmore at the Capuchin priory of Pantasaph, Wales.

Apt quotations suggest themselves from several poems, and restraint alone bars a citation from "Orient Ode," inspired, as Thompson confessed, by the liturgy of Holy Saturday, and which ranks him, in Father Donnelly's judgment, as the supreme poet of the liturgy. Let it serve our present purpose to show how the contacts with Patmore and the liturgy gave shape and body to Patmore's vision of Lourdes. In Thompson's "Assumpta Maria," of which the sources, as he said, "are almost entirely taken from the Office of the Assumption," the recurrent theme is:

Who am I the heavens assume? *An*
All am I, and I am one.

"She in us and we in her are" united in Christ's mystic unity "beating Godward." Probably no other passage of Thompson's strikes this note so clearly.

Thompson's rival for the title of the greatest Victorian poet was the Jesuit, Gerard Manley Hopkins, that super-sensitive soul well characterized in Kilmer's line, "O happy moth that flew into the Sun!" From such a coign of vantage Hopkins could well study the Christ in us, while, in his masterpiece, "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe," he could chant Christ "dwelling spiritually in us now . . . so that men can now draw (as they draw breath) *more and more Christ.*"¹ In the presence of this concept of growing more and more Christ-ful as simply as we draw breath, one would naturally recall too Alice Meynell's charming lines, "To the Unknown God," of which we allow ourselves fuller quotation.

One of the crowd went up,
 And knelt before the Paten and the Cup,
 Received the Lord, returned in peace, and prayed
 Close to my side; then in my heart I said:

"O Christ, in this man's life—
 This stranger who is Thine—in all his strife,
 All his felicity, his good and ill,
 In the assaulted stronghold of his will,

"I do confess Thee here,
 Alive within this life: I know Thee near
 Within this lowly conscience, closed away
 Within this brother's solitary day.

¹A sense-quotation, not a strict verbal one, as given by Gerald F. Lahey, S.J., "Gerard Manley Hopkins," *Commonweal*, October 20, 1933.

"Christ, in his numbered breath,
Christ in his beating heart and in his death,
Christ in his mystery. From that secret place
And from that separate dwelling, give me grace."

On our side of the Atlantic this growing consciousness of Christ-in-His-brethren was sensed and sung in exquisite numbers in Louise Imogen Guiney's "Martyrs' Idyl." She said of this poem that it came straight out of the *Acta Sanctorum* but it stepped forth at her voice because it called to a kindred spirit in her own breast. Short quotation can hardly capture the elusive charm with which this thought is woven throughout the whole, but these lines are perhaps as illustrative as any. The maiden is being examined before her judge:

"What is thine age?" "They tell me, seventeen years."
"And thy condition?" Whereto she replied:
"Christ's." Very patiently he asked:
"Art bond or free?" as runs the rote of law.
She smiled in answering: "Free: made free by Christ;
Else of free parents honorably born,
Rhoxis and Heräis, who both are dead."
"Then why unmarried?" "For Christ's sake," she said,
"I have been busy with the things of Christ:"
(For none could quench that hectic "Christ" in her,
Poor fool!)

An article in the *Month*, May, 1917, concluded with the words: "Over the shoulders of this green old world is rising the dawn of better things in literature and in life. And Kilmer is the blithe herald of their coming." "If what I nowadays write is considered poetry," Kilmer himself would write from the battlefields of France, "then I became a poet in November, 1913"—the date of his conversion. In the stress of war Kilmer was living the poetry of mystic union with Christ, happy in the knowledge that he was making up in his flesh, to use St. Paul's expression, what was lacking to the sufferings of Christ.

My shoulders ache beneath my pack
(Lie easier, Cross, upon His back).
I march with feet that burn and smart
(Tread, Holy Feet, upon my heart).
Men shout at me who may not speak
(They scourged Thy back and smote Thy cheek).

So let me render back again
This millionth of Thy gift. Amen.

His gift was sealed in blood in July, 1918.

Of other "holy poets" (the phrase is Francis Thompson's), who have so seen and served Christ in His Mystical Body, as Helen Parry Eden and Alfred Noyes, space requirements do not permit quotation. But let us not leave the company of the poets without recalling Kilmer's canons of Catholic writing as penned to his wife, Aline Kilmer:

The Catholic Faith is such a thing that I'd rather write moderately well about it than magnificently well about anything else. It is more important, more beautiful, more necessary than anything else in life. You and I have seen miracles—let us not cease to celebrate them. . . . If what you write does not clearly praise the Lord and His Saints and Angels, let it praise such types of Heaven as we know in our life—God knows they are numerous enough.

May Mother Church find eloquent voices for her message in us her children! The Revival in America is still largely a promise: Alice Meynell's plea of the years ago still echoes in our ears: "Even now English voices . . . are calling upon America to begin—to begin, for the world is expectant." In John Moody's "The Long Road Home" we read, to our shame, how on his first attraction towards Catholicism, he was prompted to read some Catholic book, but "I did not know of any. Nor could I find any; book stores did not seem to keep them. So I continued to read about Catholicism exclusively in non-Catholic books." That was roughly five years ago. Will any convert, or any single American be able, five years hence, to say the same?

One last consideration: Newman, Patmore, Hopkins, Alice Meynell, Chesterton, Father Martindale, Joyce and Aline Kilmer, Michael Williams, Maritain, Claudel, Ghéon, Huysmans, and a score of other leaders in the Revival have been and are converts. Those who signalize themselves in the service of the Faith nowadays are those who study religion and worship with an adult mind. "What is your explanation of the fact," I one day asked a Jesuit confrère, "that practically all the leaders of the Revival are converts?" "This is a work that demands a certain conversion even of those born to the Faith," he replied, "because the Catholicism of the twentieth century, Catholic Action and lay leadership, is not the static Catholicism of the nineteenth."

Educators and collegiate America, the call is to you. At present a man like George F. Moore is able to answer his question, "Will America become Catholic?" with a decided

negative, because the influence of Catholics is "bewilderingly slight." With the progress of the Revival may Mr. Moore and millions more be brought to see clearly that the only escape from "the modern dilemma" is a full Catholic culture built upon the Catholic cult. And as the revival grows, may what Regis College and Denver are doing here these days be held in grateful recollection.

A Catholic Looks at Eugene O'Neill

REVEREND JOSEPH A. DALY

A radio address, delivered over WLWL January 16, 1933.

SOME time ago Broadway witnessed an unusual spectacle. In the shadow of one of its theaters a typical metropolitan audience sat with faintly troubled and bewildered eyes watching a drama about religion unfold itself upon the stage of the Henry Miller theater. It had been a long time since the name of the Saviour had been mentioned on the boards of Mazda Lane save in blasphemy; many years had passed since speculations concerning God, the soul and immortality had echoed within showhouse walls, and ages, as Broadway calculates time, had elapsed since a chief character in a play had cast himself at the foot of a crucifix and poured forth his soul in a proud and exalted acknowledgment of belief.

It was all strange and to a Catholic observer tremendously moving. Moreover it added more than a little to this writer's sense of elation to realize that here was a play written by America's greatest dramatist, and produced by the best-known organization in the history of our theater, a play which devoted itself to a study of the warring elements in man's consciousness and to a rehearsing of the part which religion plays in life. Such is Eugene O'Neill's latest and (philosophically, at least), best play to date, "Days Without End."

It is not his technical skill in the craftsmanship of the theater that has made Eugene O'Neill preëminent amongst the playwrights of our day. True, he has been the most dar-

ing experimenter of our time. He revived the use of masks, he reintroduced the use of the aside, a device which had long been proclaimed obsolete and savoring of the naïve melodramas of another day, he successfully applied the technique of ancient Greek tragedy to the modern stage, and he was especially happy in his ability to apply the art of suggestion in the creation of the background of his plays so that this background made a firm and unobtrusive setting for his characters.

But it is because of his individuality, because of his remote aloofness from the current fads of the theater that his work is stamped with a strength and virility which is rarely equaled. For of his dramas it may be said in paraphrase, "This is no play you behold; this is a man." All the intensity of a shy nature, passionately preoccupied with great problems of human existence went into the formulation of these works. Violence, bloodshed, frustration, lust ran their gamut in the lives of his characters, but ever behind the swift play of mood and action, there stretched overshadowingly the philosophical tenets which at the moment he was assaying.

From the Catholic standpoint these plays were morbid, bitter, despairing; in them there rang no note of hope, no faint glimmering of eternal shores was visioned through the mists of hopelessness. They were alien to everything that the Church represented.

It was therefore with some surprise we beheld Joseph Wood Krutch, noted dramatic critic, writing in an introduction to a group of O'Neill's plays:

Nearly every unfavorable criticism of his works may be traced to some misapprehension of his intention, and we cannot judge him truly without realizing that he has set himself to a task different in kind from that which the contemporary playwright commonly undertakes.

As for myself I find my mind constantly going back to a remark which he once let fall in conversation. "Most modern plays," he said, "are concerned with the relation between man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested only in the relation between man and God."

And again he wrote to George Jean Nathan: "The playwright of today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fears of death with.

"It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlor entertainer."

However startling this view of O'Neill was at the time of its appearance, succeeding events have fully confirmed it, and we realize today that no one is capable of understanding the transitions through which his thought and feeling have gone in the years of writing unless he makes this fact the foundation of his study.

Like many other great souls, O'Neill is ever questing after Truth; his search for the Holy Grail has carried him through many dismal corners of the world of knowledge.

It is in "Days Without End" that he has chosen to make clear, at least in part, the many diverse lands of sojourn that held him for a while, for it is not going beyond the facts to assume that the author and John Loving, the chier character in the play, have much in common. It is as if O'Neill had etched into its lines all the doubt and fear and hope and aspiration which are part of his present state in an effort to crystallize them in an objective way and thus make more easy of appraisal the pattern in which they are contained.

In any case the opening scene of "Days Without End" finds the venerable and kindly priest, Father Baird, discoursing upon the various stages of unbelief through which his nephew had passed:

Not a moment's peace did he give me. I was the heathen to him and he was bound he'd convert me to something. First it was Atheism unadorned. Then it was Atheism wedded to Socialism. . . . But Socialism proved too weak-kneed a mate, and the next I heard Atheism was living in free love with Anarchism, with a curse by Nietzsche to bless the union. And then came the Bolshevik dawn, and he greeted that with unholy howls of glee and wrote me he'd found a congenial home at last in the bosom of Karl Marx . . . He couldn't contain himself when the news came they'd turned naughty school-boys and were throwing spit-balls at Almighty God and had sup-
planted Him with the slave-owning state—the most grotesque God that ever came out of Asia.

But let us for a minute imagine that the voice of Father Baird has faded. With political and sociological experiments I cannot imagine that Eugene O'Neill is intensely concerned because of the fact that he probably realizes that man's relation to man and collective manhood's relation to

the individual man is principally determined by man's view of his relation to God. If such be the case, O'Neill is eminently correct.

But the outlines of the strange pilgrimage are there. Perhaps you may recall that first bitter short play of his called "Before Breakfast," in which a nagging wife drives her husband into committing suicide. Or again the hapless sailor Olson looking forward in pathetic expectation to his homeland and finding himself drugged and shanghaied into another long, weary voyage. And as O'Neill marched into the larger field, that infinitely pathetic study in frustration, "Beyond the Horizon," with its ache of human longing for the imagined happiness and achievement that lie beyond the purple hills.

This period came to an end with the savage tearing at life which was best expressed in the story of "The Hairy Ape." Here was Yank, the stoker, broad-chested, raucous-voiced troglodyte, beating hopelessly at the metallic surface of an impenetrable civilization.

So dem boids don't tink I belong, neider . . . Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't . . . your belly. Feedin' your face sinksers and coffee—dat don't touch it. Its way down at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it and yuh can't stop it. It moves and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops.

Dat's me now—I don't tick, see? I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw . . . I can't see—it's all dark, get me? It's all wrong!

Say, youse up dere, Man in the Moon, yuh look so wise, gimme de answer, huh? . . . where do I get off at, huh?

But no answer comes to Yank, not even when he meets his death in the crushing embrace of the giant gorilla.

The voice of Father Baird resumes:

And what do you think was his next hiding place? Religion, no less . . . in the defeatist mysticism of the East. First it was China and Lao-Tze that fascinated him, but afterwards he ran on to Buddha and his letters for a time extolled passionless contemplation.

Always with Eugene O'Neill the search went on. Digging into the depths of life, seeking through the portrayal of as varied a group of characters as were ever created by one playwright to draw from life some interpretation of its mean-

ing. Sadly he dipped into the impassive philosophies of the East.

There was that moment in "The Fountain" when the aging Ponce de Leon contemplates his death:

Juan Ponce de Leon is past. He is resolved into the thousand moods of beauty that make up happiness, color of the sunset . . . of tomorrow's dawn, breath of the great Trade Wind . . . sunlight on grass, an insect's song, the rustle of leaves, an ant's ambitions.

Oh, Luis, I begin to know eternal youth. I have found my fountain. Oh, Fountain of Eternity, take back this drop, my Soul.

Then appeared the colorful spectacle of "Marco's Millions," that bitter satire of the buy-and-sell individuality, who in knowing the price of everything, had found the value of nothing. Old Kublai, the Great Kaan, stands broodingly over the body of his beloved granddaughter. In his ears resounds the praise of the chorus, "Greatest of the Great! Son of Heaven! Lord of Earth! Sovereign of the World! Lord of Life and Death!" Half in mockery, half in pain, he speaks:

The Son of Heaven? Then I should know a prayer. Sovereign of the World? Then I command the world to pray! In silence! Prayer is beyond words! Contemplate the eternal life of Life! . . .

Know in your heart that the living of life can be noble! Know that the dying of death can be noble! Be exalted by life! Be inspired by death! Be humbly proud! Be proudly grateful! Be immortal because life is immortal! Contain the harmony of womb and grave within you!

Possess life as a lover—then sleep requited in the arms of death! If you awake, love again! If you sleep on, rest in peace! Who knows which? What does it matter? It is nobler not to know!

However the playwright felt at the time the words of the Great Kaan came from his pen it was not within himself to rest easy under this admonition, and the popped sleep of Oriental thought could not long content him. There followed "The Great God Brown," the most tortured and mystical of his plays to that time. Dazed audiences found themselves endeavoring to follow a strange mixture of realism and fantasy, whose misty thought was ever and anon illumined by revealing flashes of sympathetic comprehension. But its end was an ecstatic paeon of nature-worship, as the character Cybel (a personification of Cybele, the ancient nature-goddess of the Levant) pronounces her valedictory over the dead body of William Brown:

Always Spring comes again bearing life! Always again! Always, always forever again! Spring again!—life again—Summer and Fall and death and peace again!—(*with agonized sorrow*)—but always, always, love and conception and birth and pain again—Spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again!—(*then with agonized exultance*) bearing . . . the glorious blazing crown of life again!

"But," continues Father Baird, "the next I knew he was through with the East. It was not for his Western soul, he decided, and he was running through Greek philosophy . . . Then a letter came which revealed him bogged down in evolutionary scientific theory again—a dyed-in-the-wool mechanist."

It was from such a composite background that there emerged "Strange Interlude" and "Mourning Becomes Electra." The tale of Nina Leeds, *femme fatale*, and the men whose lives were torturously wound around her, and the bitter saga of the mad Mannons whom the furies in the person of disordered endocrines and incestuous fixations lashed to an inevitable doom.

Yes, our lives are merely strange, dark interludes in the electrical display of God the Father. [Strange Interlude.]

I'm not bound away, I'm bound here to the Mannon dead . . . I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutters nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die! [Mourning Becomes Electra.]

Thus as the whirring wheels and clanking levers of the blind mechanism of life moved in their irresistible ways, the daughter of the Mannons condemned herself to a living death.

There followed a silence of over two years, and finally a new O'Neill play emerged upon Broadway. To the amazement of theatergoers "Ah, Wilderness" proved to be a charming, homely, and nostalgic study of the pangs of adolescence. Evidently O'Neill was mellowing; the flavor of humanity ran richly through this new work.

In the silence of those two years the strong, insistent running of the Hound of Heaven must have become more and more audible to the playwright's soul, for when "Days Without End" opened, he had incorporated a quotation from that beloved poem in his text.

Many times in the past his characters had cried aloud in effect, "Designer Infinite, ah, must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?" Now in this new play John Loving undergoes the anguish of one who has heard the voice, and who is torn in the struggle between his two natures, the one begging him to heed, the other in contemptuous fury telling him that it is nothing but "Old superstition, born of fear! Beyond death there is nothing."

Throughout the play that lower self, a macabre figure whose face is covered by a skull-like mask and whose snarling metallic voice makes mockery of his finest thoughts, is ever at John's side. The story moves to its climax with giant strides and the understanding are aware that here is not a story of one man, but the story of humanity. For the conflict through which John goes is a dramatization of the cry of Paul, "The good I will, I do not. The evil I will not, that I do."

In the next room the sick wife tosses restlessly in fever. "Nothing can save her," snarls the masked figure. "Her end in your story is coming true. It was a cunning method of murder." He broods sardonically over John's bowed head. Suddenly John springs to his feet:

If I could only pray! If I could only believe again . . . A fate in my story, Uncle said, the Will of God! I went to the Church . . . Where I used to believe, where I used to pray . . . If I could see the Cross again!

Against the impotent resistance of the masked figure he makes his way through the door, and we find him later as the dawn is breaking standing beneath the crucifix he had known as a child, pouring forth his soul to the image of the Saviour. The figure of evil raises a distorted face to the Crucified One. His hand moves upward falteringly; even the metallic voice has become curiously mellowed and gentle. "Thou hast conquered, O Lord, Thou art—the End!" Life passes from the twisted face, and the body slips slowly to the ground.

Around the thorn-crowned head strange golden lights begin to break in ever-widening rays, as the sun rises once more over earth. John Loving stands with transfigured countenance, eyes upon the cross.

"Listen," he says to Father Baird, who has come to tell him that Elsa will live—

Listen! Do you hear?

Father Baird: Hear what, Jack?

John Loving: Life laughs with God's love again! Life laughs with love!

Thus the play comes to an end. To those of religious conviction or even to those who belong to that great majority bereft of any faith and any religious association this play presents something that can well be cherished. It is elemental, it enshrines the problem that every man has sometime or other considered within his heart—the problem of his own purpose in life, the reason for his existence.

Those who have seen it with an open mind come forth with much that they can carry away within their inner souls, for in its lines is caught a great deal of the beauty and anguish of man's everlasting struggle with his lower nature.

If this play adequately represents the thought and feeling of its great author, the long voyage home is finished, the Odyssey has been completed, and in a peace-bringing haven a restless soul has at last found the everlasting answer—the answer of the "Hound of Heaven," the answer of the Great Augustine: "Oh Beauty, ever ancient and ever new! Too late have I known Thee, too late have I loved Thee, Oh Eternal Beauty!"